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Human-centric approach to Space

Space is not primitively an order between things, it is rather a quality of things in relation to ourselves."

Henri Wallon

Overcoming the material quality of space

Space, built and designed by human, constitutes a peculiar field of research. And that's because, even though it includes structures and objects, its geometric dimension and technical characteristics by themselves, are not sufficient enough to interpret its origins, characteristics, function and meaning.

The problem with an approach, which examines space only through these features is to disregard the dynamics developed due to human presence. And that's because, it is human who design, construct, use and evaluate the space, individually or collectively, in the framework of subjective views and social conventions.

The human-centric quality of space covers its material quality and refers to social dynamic, social relations, culture, behavior, and procedures of communication and interaction. For this reason we attach to space two more qualities, one psychological and one social.

The psychological dimension of space

The area surrounding individual is a material reality, which is also structured psychologically, based on the interdependence between individual's characteristics and those of its environment. These bonds sometimes focus on individual's characteristics and other times on its environment's characteristics and are imbued with emotions, symbols, recreations and relationships. In this complex spatial-psychological reality individual's practices in space constitutes the hinge around which the interplay connecting individual with its environment is developed.

The social dimension of Space

Urban and architectural structures express to a large extent from a functional and symbolical point of view, the dominant values and models of social environment. The practices of space usage that individual (or group) develops are affected, obviously,

by these concepts, while receiving the effects of its own points of references, values and standards that were formed by itself through interactions with others in context of its personal history.

At the level of social quality of space as well as at the level of its psychological one, practices in space should be treated as an essential "tool" of a social interaction process that is developing between subject (individual and / or group) and the dominant characteristics of its social environment.

The pedagogical dimension of space

Due to psychological and social quality of space, its arrangement and aesthetics transfer to the subject (person or group) values and patterns that dominate in society. Utilization of space is opposing with organization of space since the concrete material environment, as we have seen, becomes important field of forming behavior patterns and practices often reaching the stage of interventions that alters the original form of space. Space organization is "counter posed" by space usage, because a specific physical environment is, as we have seen, a major field of shaping behavior patterns and practices often reaching the stage of interventions that alters the original form of space.

This dynamic expresses in material sizes the factors of the interaction developed between the subject and its social environment. Space consists of the material basis of this interaction, which aims to coordinate the attitudes of individual or group with the characteristics of their social environment.

In practice, this dynamic has a great educational value. On one hand, the information offered by space constitutes potentially stimuli of learning and, on the other hand, opportunities provided by space for interaction between social and material environment lead to skills acquisition and formation of behavioral patterns. Space is the material basis of a complex pedagogical process that connects the subject simultaneously with its broader environment and direct surrounding. Thus, space can become pedagogical field that teaches "What is it", "How do you explain it", "How can I act", "What behavior could I have", for every object or situation encountered by the subject.

The above presented framework acquires particular significance in case of childhood. The pedagogical quality of space creates the preconditions under which child is learning and developing through the practices adopted and experiences acquired in its material surroundings. Wealth and complexity of stimuli as well as the multiplicity of possibilities offered by space for the development of activities become particularly important.